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# AMBS window

## Seeing, hearing, and praying with the St. John's Bible

Rebecca Slough, PhD, academic dean and associate professor of worship and the arts

**M**onks at St. John's Abbey and professors at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn., wanted to mark the dawn of a third millennium of Christian witness. In collaboration with Donald Jackson, the calligrapher for the Queen of England, the idea emerged to create a handwritten illuminated Bible—the first one in over 500 years.

The St. John's Bible draws upon the best of recent biblical scholarship, contemporary artistic imagination, traditional methods of manuscript production, and the twenty-first century realities: proliferating scientific knowledge, world-wide violence, oppression, the fragility of interdependent human and environmental webs of life, and the persistent hope of Christian faith. Artists used gold leaf wherever they wanted to heighten awareness of God's possible presence or activity in the biblical narrative; the use of gold is what makes the St. John's Bible an illumination.

We at AMBS had the privilege of hosting an exhibit that included twenty full-sized gicleé prints from this Bible: eleven prints for Hebrew Bible texts and nine prints for New Testament texts.

These St. John's Bible prints help us see new dimensions of the selected scriptures. Visual art helps us see relationships between actions and their settings all at once. When we hear or read the Scriptures we can miss how these relationships unfold throughout the passage. Reading, hearing and seeing each reveal something of God's love, mercy, judgement, and grace, *but they each reveal differently.*

The St. John's Bible prints offer a fresh expression of God's word for our time. They inspire us to wonder and to pray.

This exhibit at AMBS was the gracious gift of the Bridgefolk Community. A second set of prints from the St. John's Bible is coming for Pastors Week, January 2016, and will be on display during the month of February. ●

**A**t AMBS we immerse ourselves in the Scriptures. One of our seven core practices is "to interpret, preach, pray, sing and tell the biblical narratives. As disciples centered in Jesus and attuned to the Spirit, we revel in the Bible and its ability to reveal God to us."

We anticipate delving deeply into the gospel of Mark during Pastors Week, and offering new ways for all in the church to draw on the biblical insights of AMBS professors through online courses. Read more in this issue of AMBS Window to discover how we, professors and students, learn to read and interpret the Bible together and invite all in the church to join us in this life-giving practice.

**Photo: Lawrence Giden, student in the Master of Arts in Christian Formation degree program, examines one of the St. John's Bible prints with Rebecca Slough, academic dean. Credit: Mary E. Klassen**

# Where's my verse?

Loren L. Johns, professor of New Testament



**H**ave you ever been in a Bible study on John 5 and discovered that your Bible is missing verse 4?

Where did it go? Is your Bible defective?

Most modern translations of the Bible do not include John 5:4 in the text. Instead, most have a footnote at that point, indicating that the oldest and best—or perhaps “some”—manuscripts do not include those words. In fact, the New Revised Standard Version, the Common English Bible, the Revised Standard Version, the English Standard Version, the Message, the New International Version (both the 1984 NIV and the 2011 NIV), the New Jerusalem Bible, the NET Bible, the New Living Translation, and the Good News Translation all omit this verse or relegate it to a footnote.

These issues matter deeply because we understand the Bible as the Word of God—a gift from God that reveals God as well as life itself. It is important to treat the Bible with respect, thus not allowing later scribes to add things to the inspired Word of God, however “helpful” those additions might seem (as with John 5:4). Most translations treat Scripture with so much respect that they study carefully what words are original and what came to be added centuries later. Thanks be to God for such dedicated study!

The reason most translations omit it is because the scholars who prepared those translations judged that this verse was added to the Gospel of John by later scribes who thought some additional information at this point might be helpful. In his textual commentary

on the Greek New Testament, Bruce Manning Metzger says that (1) none of the earliest and best manuscripts contain this verse; (2) more than 20 manuscripts that contain this verse also contain marks next to it that indicate that the scribe thought the authenticity of this verse was questionable; (3) many of the words in this verse appear nowhere else in John's writings; and (4) the manuscripts that do have this verse disagree with each other about the wording. Overall, Metzger considers it quite certain that this verse was not original to John.

So how did it get its own verse number? Verse numbers were not added to the Bible until the 16th century. Because the King James Version was translated from a Greek text based on later, inferior manuscripts, which contain late scribal expansions, there are a number of verses in the King James that do not appear in most modern translations of the Bible.

This is not an isolated phenomenon in the New Testament. Other “spurious” verses include Matthew 17:21; 18:11; 23:14; Mark 7:16; 9:44; 11:26; 15:28; Luke 17:36; 23:17; Acts 8:37; 15:34; 24:7-8a; 28:29; Romans 16:24; and 1 John 5:7b-8a. The two larger passages that are not original are Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11. Bible readers would do well to notice that these passages were added later.

*Loren Johns, PhD, (above) is professor of New Testament at AMBS. Among the courses he teaches for graduate students and for online non-credit students is one on how the Bible came to be—how it was formed from ancient manuscripts. ●*

## AMBS Window Fall 2015 Volume 26 Issue 1

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## ALUMNI NEWS

**Willard Swartley** (Bachelor of Divinity 1962 and Professor Emeritus) recently had an entry, “The Bible in Society,” published in *The Cambridge History of The Bible: 1750–2000*, Vol. 4.

**Rebecca Kauffman** (Master of Divinity 2012) was ordained for pastoral ministry at Paoli (Ind.) Mennonite Fellowship in July 2015.

**Dorothy Yoder Nyce** (Master of Divinity 1981) recently self-published a 200-page book titled *Mennonites Encounter Hinduism: An Annotated Bibliography*. It annotates writing by about a hundred Mennonite Brethren, General Conference Mennonite and Mennonite Church individuals, from

anecdotes to disciplined academic studies of Hindu thought or practice.

**Ryan Siemens** (Master of Divinity 2007) is Area Church Minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

**Innocent Mashakiro** (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 2002) began this fall as a professor of social work at Taylor University, Upland, Ind.

**James E. Horsch** (Bachelor of Divinity 1966) provides the annual daily Bible readings for the Committee on the Uniform Series. These appear in the *Adult Bible Study* guide and are the basis of devotionals in *Rejoice!* from MennoMedia. ●

## Engaging the Bible at AMBS

Semester courses,  
short courses, special events

AMBS offers others in the church the opportunity to join with us in careful, faithful exploration of Scripture:

### Pastors Week, January 25–28

The Bible Says *What?* Discovering Scripture Anew in Jesus' Company will focus the conversation at Pastors Week. We will dig deep into the book of Mark to discover what we can learn about how Jesus used Scripture.

- Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, AMBS Dean of Lifelong Learning
- Bryan Moyer Suderman, Bible teacher and music minister

Visit [www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek](http://www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek)

### Interterm courses

Hybrid courses: online study with only one week on campus, January 11–16, 2016

- Isaiah, taught by Ben Ollenburger
- The Parables, taught by Mary Schertz

Visit [www.ambs.edu/academic/interterm.cfm](http://www.ambs.edu/academic/interterm.cfm)

### Online Short Courses

Non-credit, six-week courses

- Creating a Scene in Corinth: Conflict in 1 Corinthians, taught by Reta Halteman Finger  
April 13–May 24, 2016
- Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible, taught by Mary Schertz  
March 2–April 13, 2016

Visit [www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter](http://www.ambs.edu/churchleadershipcenter) ●

## Studying the illuminated text



In the gallery where the exhibit of the Saint John's Bible exhibit began, we gathered for chapel on Sept. 8 (shown above). After singing together, AMBS students, faculty and staff gathered in small clusters around the prints, reading the biblical text in each and exploring how the accompanying art reflected that text in both modern and traditional ways. At left and going counter-clockwise, Brenna Harker, admissions counselor; Mary Schertz, professor of New Testament; Eileen Saner, director of library services; and students Austin Roberts and Ben Bouwman share what they see in one of the prints. ●

## YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

Recent economic challenges make it difficult for students to fund seminary study. AMBS attempts to keep tuition affordable; our tuition increases have remained below inflation and our levels of financial aid have remained consistent. However, for many different reasons, the cost of seminary study looms as a barrier for some.

Your gifts can ease the financial burden for students. Daniel Grimes (right), director of enrollment and financial aid, and other administrators at AMBS have set a goal to increase AMBS financial aid and scholarships so that more students have access to quality seminary education without incurring large debts. These contributions also will help ensure the strength of the church as seminary-educated leaders join congregations who are involved in God's reconciling mission in the world. ●



# AMBS PANORAMA

## **Anabaptist Witness explores food and mission**

The theme of the fall issue of *Anabaptist Witness* is "Taste and See: Anabaptism, Food, and Mission," exploring how the food we eat connects us with the Creator and with others living around the world.

All content is available at no charge online: [www.anabaptistwitness.org](http://www.anabaptistwitness.org) The site also provides information about purchasing print copies.

## **Were you one of the 661?**

The AMBS Church Leadership Center registered 661 participations in the 2014–15 year. These resources included theological, biblical and practical ministry short courses, webinars and seminars for people seeking personal enrichment, along with undergraduate study programs and professional development for people in ministry. To discover more of what AMBS offers in its wide array of programs for everyone in the church, visit the Lifelong Learning section of the website: [www.ambs.edu](http://www.ambs.edu)

## **Seminary Preview Day**

Do you know someone who should be part of the 2016 incoming seminary

class? Encourage him or her to plan a campus visit. Seminary Preview Day, March 18, is the best time to meet professors and students and learn about financial aid and degrees. Register at [www.ambs.edu/visitAMBS](http://www.ambs.edu/visitAMBS)

## **Seminary community prays for Obed and Phena Dashan**

When AMBS graduates Obed and Phena Dashan visited AMBS in late September, telling about the challenges of ministry in Nigeria in the context of Boko Haram violence in Nigeria, the seminary community surrounded them in prayer.



Obed said, "In loving and praying for them [Boko Haram], we find encouragement to keep going. Where we find strength is in the Word of God."

Obed and Phena were honored with the annual Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition during their visit to AMBS.



## **!Explore resumes**

!Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth will be offered in summer 2016. Young people who have completed grades 11 and 12 and their congregations may apply. The program introduces teens to theological and ministry study and gives them opportunities to test their gifts in internships with their pastors. The goal is for both the young people and their congregations to learn from each other while youth are encouraged to listen for God's call to ministry.

Information about the program and application forms are available online. Complete and send in forms by February 1: [www.ambs.edu/explore](http://www.ambs.edu/explore) ●

# PRESIDENT'S WINDOW SARA WENGER SHENK



**O**ur most ardent hope is that leaders formed at AMBS will learn how to humbly and confidently interpret the Scriptures in light of Jesus' reconciling life and witness, becoming spiritually mature catalysts for transformative change and wholesome community life wherever they work.

In late September, we were astonished by the powerful witness of two of our graduates, Obed and Phena Dashan. They are denominational and educational leaders in the two million member

Church of Christ in Nations, a sister church to the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria and surrounding countries. We awarded them the AMBS Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition.

"At AMBS we learned from professors who knew the Word of God and knew the history of God's people," said Obed. "The Church in Nigeria is going through persecution. Boko Haram is killing people, burning churches, destroying villages. 500 congregations have been lost. Many, many people have been killed or displaced. There are killings on a daily basis. We always know when we go out that we may be killed.

"We find strength in the Word of God," Obed said. "The Word of God revealed in Jesus Christ is the truth we preach. We were deeply enriched by the presence of truth, the power of truth, and the inspiration of truth at AMBS, a true community built around daily meditating on the Word of God. Please pray for us. We are tempted to retaliate. The Word of God has given us direction.

Don't hit back. You are more in charge when you let go than when you take control. We pray for Boko Haram. We love them, but we don't like them. In loving them and praying for them we find the courage to keep going."

Phena is the first woman to head a theological school in her denomination. She coordinates a Theological Education by Extension Program for more than 3000 students. She spoke with the supreme composure of one who knows a 'peace that passes understanding' in every cell of her being. "We feel love surrounding us," she said, "and the love of God's people. In little ways we do our best to proclaim the gospel of peace. Jesus is our peace and he came to bring peace. When you have peace—you have everything!"

In these anxious times, what a blessing it was to see two courageous leaders personify the power that a deep rooting in Scripture and Spirit provides for authoritatively disarming fear as they serve their people. ●